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AMENDMENT RECOMMENDED TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

A REPORT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE RECOMMENDING AMENDMENT TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA, TOGETHER WITH A PROPOSAL FOR AMENDMENT ORIGINATED WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND CONTAINED IN A MEMORANDUM, DATED AT LONDON IN MAY 1955, FROM THE BRITISH MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND CIVIL AVIATION

JULY 1, 1957.—Amendment was read the first time and the injunction of secrecy was removed therefrom. The amendment and the President's message of transmittal, and all accompanying papers were referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations and ordered to be printed for the use of the Senate

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THE WHITE HOUSE, *July 1, 1957.*

To the Senate of the United States:

Referring to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, signed at London on June 10, 1948, I transmit herewith a report by the Secretary of State recommending amendment of that convention. The proposal for amendment originated with the Government of the United Kingdom and is contained in a memorandum, dated at London in May 1955, from the British Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, a copy of which memorandum is also transmitted herewith.

I request that the Senate give its advice and consent to the ratification of the amendment to regulation 30 of chapter III of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, signed at London on June 10, 1948, as recommended in the report of the Secretary of State.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER.

(Enclosures: (1) Report of the Secretary of State; (2) memorandum, with attachment.)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, June 17, 1957.

The PRESIDENT,
The White House:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification of an amendment to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, the undersigned, the Secretary of State, has the honor to submit to the President for transmission to the Senate, if the President approve thereof, a copy of a memorandum, dated at London in May 1955, from the British Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, which sets forth the amendment as proposed by the Government of the United Kingdom.

The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, signed at London on June 10, 1948 (3 UST 3450; TIAS 2495), entered into force on November 19, 1952. The United States and 46 other countries are parties to the convention at the present time. The 1948 convention sets forth uniform principles and rules relating to the promotion of maritime safety. Annexed to the convention and forming an integral part thereof are six chapters of technical regulations. Under the terms of article XV of the convention, amendments proposed by any contracting government are communicated by the Government of the United Kingdom to the contracting governments for their consideration and acceptance. If any such amendment is unanimously accepted by the contracting governments, the convention is amended accordingly. The proposal circulated by the United Kingdom pursuant to the above-mentioned provision provides for amendment of regulation 30 of chapter III to permit the carriage of inflatable liferafts as an alternative to the conventional buoyant apparatus and the liferafts of noninflatable type presently permitted by the regulations as lifesaving apparatus in passenger ships.

The memorandum circulated by the United Kingdom states that extensive tests have been carried out with inflatable liferafts which depend for their bouyancy upon inflation by carbon dioxide gas, which tests show that, for lifesaving purposes, this type of equipment is considerably superior to other forms of bouyant apparatus now in use. A description of the types of inflatable liferafts used in the tests and particulars of the tests to which they were subjected are contained in the document attached to the memorandum.

As set forth in further detail below, supporting or nonobjecting replies with respect to the proposed amendment have been received from the Departments of Commerce, Defense, and Treasury in response to the Department's request for the views of those Departments.

As the primary responsibility for administration of vessels' safety equipment regulations under the convention rests in the United States Coast Guard, the text of the proposal for amendment was included as an appendix in the agenda for the public hearing of the Merchant Marine Council of the Coast Guard, held on April 24, 1956. Copies of the agenda were circularized to the shipping industry, including management and labor organizations, 2 months prior to the hearing. Both written and oral comments were received at the hearing. The Treasury Department has informed the State Department that, having taken into account the comments received, the Commandant of the Coast Guard considers it desirable for the United States to agree to the British proposal.

The Navy Department in submitting views on behalf of the Department of Defense stated in part:

> The Navy Department is familiar with the type of inflatable liferafts described in the memoranda enclosed with the British Embassy note. These rafts are considered vastly superior to the buoyant life nets and balsa wood floats which are now required equipment on merchant ships and in use on most naval vessels. The Navy is, therefore, replacing such buoyant equipment on naval vessels with inflatable liferafts of American manufacture. To date [January 20, 1956] approximately 14,000 such rafts have been issued to newly constructed and active fleet vessels. Although the Navy Department has no direct responsibility for lifesaving equipment on merchant vessels, it is believed that, in the interest of crew and passenger safety, the use of this technically superior lifesaving equipment should be permitted. The Navy Department, therefore, recommends adoption of the proposed amendment to regulation 30, chapter III, of the International Convention on Safety of Life at Sea, 1948.

The Commerce Department stated that from the point of view of the Merchant Marine Act of 1936, as amended, the Maritime Administrator has no objection to agreement with the British proposal provided it is favorably endorsed by the United States Coast Guard.

In view of the foregoing, I recommend that the proposal be transmitted to the Senate, and that the Senate be requested to give its advice and consent to an amendment to regulation 30 of chapter III of the convention as follows:

REGULATION 30 OF CHAPTER III OF THE 1948 CONVENTION FOR THE SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA

Paragraph (d). After the word "liferafts" in line 1 add "of non-inflatable type".

New paragraph (e). "Liferafts of inflatable type may be carried in lieu of buoyant apparatus provided that, in addition to complying with the requirements of subparagraphs (i), (ii), (iii) and (vi) of paragraph (*b*) of the Regulation, each liferaft satisfies the following conditions:—

(i) It shall have ample stability in a seaway and shall be capable of being readily righted.

(ii) The inflation shall take place automatically either on the pulling of a line, or by some other simple method approved by the Administration.

(iii) The number of persons for which the raft is certified shall be determined by the Administration, and shall not exceed that for which there is sufficient room for comfortable seating. The raft when inflated shall effectively support its occupants out of the water.

(iv) The buoyancy shall be arranged, to the satisfaction of the Administration, either by a division of the buoyancy into two separate compartments each capable of supporting the certified number of persons out of the water, or otherwise, so that there is a reasonable margin of buoyancy to provide against part damage or part failure to inflate."

Respectfully submitted.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES.

(Enclosure: Memorandum, with attachment.)

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA, 1948

MEMORANDUM CIRCULATED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE XV OF THE CONVENTION

Inflatable Liferafts as Life-Saving Appliances

1. Liferafts may be carried in lieu of buoyant apparatus on passenger ships engaged on international voyages under Regulation 30 (*d*) of Chapter III of the Convention. Inflatable liferafts are, however, prohibited by this Regulation.

2. Since the Convention was accepted by Her Majesty's Government, extensive tests have been carried out with inflatable liferafts which depend for their buoyancy upon inflation by carbon dioxide gas. These tests show that, for life-saving purposes, this type of equipment is considerably superior to other forms of buoyant apparatus now in use.

3. Her Majesty's Government therefore consider that inflatable liferafts would form a valuable part of the life-saving apparatus of merchant ships and, in particular, of passenger ships engaged in short international voyages in which lifeboats do not provide accommodation for all on board. Her Majesty's Government therefore propose to other Contracting Governments that Regulation 30 of Chapter III of the Convention be amended as follows:—

Regulation 30 of Chapter III of the 1948 Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea

Paragraph (*d*). After the word "liferafts" in line 1 add "of non-inflatable type."

New Paragraph (*e*). "Liferafts of inflatable type may be carried in lieu of buoyant apparatus provided that, in addition to complying with the requirements of subparagraphs (i), (ii), (iii) and (vi) of paragraph (*b*) of the Regulation, each liferaft satisfies the following conditions:—

(i) It shall have ample stability in a seaway and shall be capable of being readily righted.

(ii) The inflation shall take place automatically either on the pulling of a line, or by some other simple method approved by the Administration.

(iii) The number of persons for which the raft is certified shall be determined by the Administration, and shall not not exceed that for which there is sufficient room for comfortable seating. The raft when inflated shall effectively support its occupants out of the water.

(iv) The buoyancy shall be arranged, to the satisfaction of the Administration, either by a division of the buoyancy into two separate compartments each capable of supporting the certified number of persons out of the water, or otherwise, so that there is a reasonable margin of buoyancy to provide against part damage or part failure to inflate."

4. A description of the types of inflatable liferafts used in the tests referred to in paragraph 2, together with particulars of the tests to which they were subjected, are contained in the attached Memorandum.

Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation,
London, May, 1955.

INFLATABLE LIFERAFTS

1. *Description*

The inflatable liferafts tested for use in merchant ships are oval or round in shape and made in several sizes, varying in carrying capacity from six to twenty persons.

They are made of rubberized cotton fabric and rely for their buoyancy on inflation by carbon-dioxide gas carried in small cylinders attached to the liferaft. They are constructed with two arches, a centre thwart and a floor, all of which are inflatable. A tent is attached to the two inflatable arches, and rises with them when inflation takes place, thus giving the occupants complete protection from the weather and extremes of temperature.

The tent has two open ends and at each opening a small rope scrambling net (or ladder) is fastened for boarding purposes. A hauling-in ladder, tapering to a point where it is secured by a toggle fastening inside the dinghy, is also provided to assist the boarding. A hemp life line is looped around the outside of the buoyancy chamber. A towing strap and a drogue are also provided.

The important parts of the buoyancy structure are completely sealed one from the other so that damage to any one part is localised.

In its deflated state for stowage on board the liferaft is kept in a canvas valise.

The principal dimensions of the twenty-person oval liferaft are approximately, length 15–16 ft., breadth 9–10 ft., height 4 ft. 7 in. The circular type is approximately 12 ft. in diameter.

At present the approved types are made by two firms, namely, (*a*) The Elliot Equipment Company Limited, Cardiff, and (*b*) R. F. D. Company Limited, Godalming, Surrey.

2. *Operation*

The canvas valise in which the liferaft is kept on board is lightly laced and to this is secured a static line. This line is required to be fastened to a strong point on the ship. The twenty-man liferaft in its valise and with equipment weights about 240 lb. and can fairly easily be launched by two men. After being thrown into the water a pull on the static line operates the gas-release mechanism and the liferaft immediately starts to inflate. As inflation takes place the liferaft breaks the valise lacing and emerges from the valise into the water.

3. *Official Tests*

Experience shows that when persons have to go into the water from a sinking ship, many deaths are caused through exposure and not drowning. To ascertain whether this loss of life could be avoided by the use of inflatable liferafts the British Admiralty arranged for extensive tests with this equipment to be carried out under as realistic conditions as possible both in Arctic and tropical waters. These tests have been extremely successful and show that inflatable liferafts

afford the occupants ample protection against extremes of temperature.

Tests have also been carried out to ascertain how the fabric of which the liferafts are made would stand up to the exposed stowage conditions to which appliances of this nature are likely to be subjected on board merchant ships. For this purpose ships operating to the Far East and to East Africa were selected in order to subject the liferafts to as wide a range of temperature and weather conditions as possible. These tests were equally successful.

Two liferafts which had remained on board untouched for over twelve months were withdrawn and subjected to flotation tests. These were launched from their normal stowage position on board and both were found to be in no way affected by the stowage conditions to which they had been subjected. Both commenced to inflate immediately the static line was pulled and both were sufficiently inflated after one minute from reaching the water to enable persons to clamber aboard. One was completely inflated in 1½ minutes and the other in 1¼ minutes. Boarding tests were carried out by men wearing standard kapok life-jackets climbing on the liferafts from the water.

After these tests the following conclusions were reached—

(*a*) The material of which the liferafts are made had withstood weathering conditions for about twelve months without deterioration. (Only time will establish its actual length of life in service.)

(*b*) The valises show signs of wear, but this is not important.

(*c*) Entry into the liferafts from the water is fairly easy for a fit and active man, and after the first man has got on board he can assist others.

(*d*) Maintenance on board should not be a big problem, but some expenditure will be involved in order that the liferafts can be tested annually by the makers.

(*e*) Compared with ordinary buoyant apparatus inflatable liferafts are a vast improvement. Experience has shown that buoyant apparatus to which persons cling are of very limited value owing to the fact that many succumb to exposure if not rescued within a short time.

4. *Inflatable Liferafts on "Empire Windrush"*

This troopship was actually carrying an inflatable liferaft for test purposes at the time she was destroyed by fire. It was successfully launched from the ship and used by about fifteen of the troops on board. These men were later asked about their experience and their replies indicated that no great difficulty was experienced in boarding it from the water.

5. *Ministry Approval*

In view of the satisfactory results of the tests, letters granting formal approval for inflatable liferafts to be used in United Kingdom registered merchant ships have been granted to the two firms mentioned in paragraph 1. The conditions of this approval are:—

(i) *Ships engaged in United Kingdom domestic trade*

In any ship coming within the various classes comprising the domestic shipping of the United Kingdom, inflatable liferafts will be accepted *in lieu* of buoyant apparatus. This affects passenger ships not engaged on international voyages and certain medium-sized fishing vessels which, under the present Rules, are required to carry one or more units of buoyant apparatus.

(ii) *Ships engaged on international voyages*

The approval also covers the use of inflatable liferafts on these ships but having regard to the exclusion of inflatable appliances under Regulation 30 of Chapter III of the Convention, the liferafts must be *in addition* to the prescribed amount of buoyant apparatus required by the Convention.

(iii) *Maintenance and equipment*

The approval is also subject to certain conditions affecting the manufacture, construction, maintenance and equipment of the liferafts. The most important of these is that the liferafts must be manufactured strictly in accordance with the approved drawings and current governmental standards of inspection and, further, that the purchaser of each liferaft is to be informed that it is necessary for it to be serviced (by the makers) at intervals not exceeding twelve months from date of manufacture.

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